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Grand Opening of Fourth Campus Unveils Technologically Advanced Maritime Training

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San Jacinto College marked the grand opening of the new Maritime Technology and Training Center on the Maritime Campus on March 8, 2016. The Center is located next to a turning basin along the Port of Houston at 3700 Old Highway 146 in La Porte, Texas – the ideal location for students training to enter the maritime industry, and for current mariners upgrading their U.S. Coast Guard certifications.

La Porte, Texas (PRWEB) March 08, 2016

With the cut of a ribbon and ring of a bell, San Jacinto College marked the grand opening of the new Maritime Technology and Training Center on the Maritime Campus on March 8, 2016.

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"This is what we have envisioned for many years," said Dr. Brenda Hellyer, San Jacinto College Chancellor. "The Maritime Technology and Training Center on our new Maritime Campus is our response to the region's growing needs surrounding the Port of Houston and the industries impacted by its activity each day. It has been many years in the making, but it is finally here, and we are excited to begin training the next generation of maritime workers right here along the Gulf Coast."

The grand opening featured remarks from The Honorable Gene Green, U.S. Representative for Texas' 29th Congressional District; The Honorable Brian Babin, U.S. Representative for Texas' 36th Congressional District; The Honorable Larry Taylor, State Senator, Texas Senate District 11; and The Honorable Dennis Paul, State Representative, Texas House District 129. Mr. Jay Guerrero, Regional Director for Southeast Texas, representing The Honorable John Cornyn, U.S. Senator, presented a congratulatory certificate to the College.

In addition, a flag raising ceremony was held, with a U.S. flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol on the first day of classes held at the Center. The flag was donated by Congressman Babin. The event culminated with a christening ceremony, ribbon cutting, and the ringing of the bell, opening the doors to the Center for tours.

Texas ranks third in the nation, with Houston ranking second, for all domestic maritime industry jobs, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers Study released by the American Maritime Partnership. However, more than half of the industry's workforce is reaching retirement age. This is why San Jacinto College began offering its maritime training in 2010, which led to the creation of the Maritime Technology and Training Center.

The Center sits 14 feet above ground and includes 45,000 square-feet of space on each of the upper and lower levels; a 3,748 square-foot suite for three full mission ship bridge simulators, donated by the Houston Pilots; 15 classrooms; an administrative suite; multipurpose room, dining area, and engineering simulators; aquatic training facility; and stations for Global Maritime Distress and Safety System training, automatic radar plotting aid training, radar training, and liquid cargo handling training. A separate industry dock for crew changes will be built in the near future in partnership with G&H Towing. The Maritime Technology and Training Center was built with funds from the 2008 bond referendum, which voters in the district overwhelmingly approved by 71 percent. The land was purchased from the Port of Houston Authority. The official ground breaking ceremony took place in December 2014.

Meeting the Need

Maritime training at San Jacinto College began in 2010 after discussions with Port of Houston Authority Commissioners and maritime industry leaders. It was found that the majority of local maritime companies were sending their crews out of state for their United States Coast Guard (USCG)-required courses because they did not have a local place for this type of training.

"The complexity of Houston Ship Channel and the Galveston Bay illustrate perfectly why U.S. licensed merchant mariners must develop and keep their navigational and other maritime skills honed to a fine edge," said Capt. Brian Penoyer, the Coast Guard Captain of the Port and Sector

Houston-Galveston commander. "As local mariners ourselves, we're excited to see this state-of-the-art training and recertification facility right here where our friends and colleagues live and work."

The College invited maritime industry leaders to discuss developing a training program specifically for their working mariners and to recruit more mariners into the industry, and unlike decades before, those with more training in the soft skills.

In 2010, the College received the assistance it needed to jumpstart the maritime training program with a Texas Workforce Commission grant of \$394,577, and a \$400,000 federal appropriation championed by U.S. Congressman Gene Green, representing Texas' 29th Congressional District. Maritime courses were offered at a facility along Highway 225 in Pasadena, Texas. Classes filled to capacity almost immediately, and the College responded by adding more courses, a radar lab, and the three full mission ship bridge simulators from the Houston Pilots.

"Houston Pilots have long been champions of promoting maritime education in the local area. When we purchased a ship simulator, it was a natural fit to partner with San Jacinto College," said Capt. Robert Shearon, Presiding Officer of Houston Pilots. "The Kongsberg ship simulator at San Jacinto College's maritime training center is a state-of-the-art training and research tool that will assist in the education and professional development of the next generation of maritime leaders. From our perspective, well trained mariners – whether Pilots, tow boat operators, or harbor assist tug captains – means safer mariners."

In 2012, San Jacinto College introduced the state's first, and only, associate degree for maritime transportation to address the maritime industry needs for more mariners with a college education. The College also began offering a program for those who wish to work in other areas of maritime by introducing an associate degree for cargo handling/logistics, transferable to the Texas Southern University maritime logistics program and the University of Houston College of Technology logistics program. An Introduction to Ships and Shipping courses was added to the College's business administration associate degree, transferable to Texas A&M University in Galveston through an articulation agreement.

Contractors on the Center include Tellepsen Builders, general contractor; Rizzo & Associates, program manager; IBI-Texas, architects, and Rear Admiral William Pickavance, USN (Ret.), maritime consultant.

"This has truly been a collaborative effort that extends far beyond San Jacinto College," said Dr. Hellyer. "It is because of our maritime partners, supporters, and community that we were able to begin our maritime training and build the Maritime Technology and Training Center on the Maritime Campus. We express our sincerest gratitude to them, and look forward to more partnerships as we grow our maritime training programs."

More than 3,500 USCG certifications have been awarded to mariners since the College began training in 2010. Currently, the program offers approximately 45 USCG and Standards for Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW)-approved courses, with this amount increasing in 2017 to meet new USCG requirements.

For information about maritime training at San Jacinto College, visit <http://www.sanjac.edu/maritime>.

About San Jacinto College

Surrounded by monuments of history, industries and maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has been serving the citizens of East Harris County, Texas, for more than 50 years. As an Achieving the Dream Leader College, San Jacinto College is committed to the goals and aspirations of a diverse population of approximately 30,000 credit students. The College offers 186 degrees and certificates, with 46 technical programs and a university transfer division. Students benefit from a support system that maps out a pathway for success, and job training programs that are renowned for meeting the needs of growing industries in the region. San Jacinto College graduates contribute nearly \$690 million each year to the Texas workforce.

For more information about San Jacinto College, please call 281-998-6150, visit sanjac.edu, or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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